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of strength or debility. He is not to put off the care of his health, till decay creeps over him, till his flesh is wasted, and customary toil becomes a burden; till the signs of exhaustion are seen from abroad, and a hint is given him that he is weakened or diseased. He knows when his body fails, and his delayed and protracted studies are irksome. He alone knows or can know, when his habitual and favourite toil becomes as it were a stranger, and is put by as an unwelcome one.



Character of Sir Thomas More, by Erasmus.

[We have translated for the amusement of our readers, a part of a letter of Erasmus, giving an account of Sir Thomas More. Erasmus, it is generally known, was his contemporary, and, when he went to England, was patronised both by More and by his master, that 'excellent king' Henry VIII. Great intimacy subsisted between them, and there were many points of resemblance in their characters to conciliate mutual esteem. They were both men of an amiable disposition, a ready and playful wit, elegant scholars, and, in enlargement of mind and liberality of sentiment, much before the age in which they lived.

This letter is curious for the manner in which it speaks of the profession of the law, and also for the view it gives of the character of Henry VIII, which accords with the observation of Hume, that Henry, in the beginning of his reign, 'even in the eyes of men of sense, gave promising hopes of his future conduct.' At the time this letter was written, he had been on the throne ten years and was twenty eight years old. How different must have been the language of Erasmus, when he learned that this same Henry, whom he so highly extols, had caused his friend, the amiable, the humorous, the eloquent and virtuous More, to be beheaded:—beheaded, because he had too much honesty and firmness to acknowledge Henry to be the supreme head of the church, against the dictates of his conscience. Erasmus, at least, might with consistency complain of his friend's untimely end. His principles and feelings inclined him to the side of toleration. It gives us pain to think that the mild temper of More could be so much exasperated by the spirit of the times, as to make him participate in acts of persecution which must have told him, when his turn came, to suffer and be silent.

We trust none of our readers will be disposed to find fault with the trifling nature of some of the circumstances selected by Erasmus in his description. Trifling as they appear in themselves, the character

of More gives them an interest; and related with so much simplicity, they seem to carry us back to the age and to the house in which he lived, and make us personally acquainted with him. More was put to death in 1535 in the fifty-third year of his age. Erasmus was thirteen years older than More and died the year after him.]

Erasmus of Rot. to Ulric Hutten.

You are by no means singular, most excellent Hutten, in the enthusiasm with which the writings of Thomas More have inspired you for his genius. Nothing, as you justly observe, can be more full of learning or of humour. Your admiration too is not without a return on the part of More; for he is so delighted with the style of your writings, that even I almost envy you. This is in truth that most amiable philosophy of Plato, which kindles a much more ardent passion among men than any beauty of form however admirable. It is not, indeed, perceived by the natural eyes; but the mind has its eyes also. So that here too the Greek adage* holds true,—love comes from seeing. By these eyes persons are sometimes joined in the closest affection, who have never interchanged a word or a look. And as it is commonly the case, from causes not to be explained, that one form attracts one person, and another another, so between minds there seems to be a certain secret relation, which makes us exceedingly delighted with some and not at all with others.

With respect to your request, that I would paint you as it were a full length portrait of More,—I wish I could do it with a skill corresponding with the earnestness of your desires. For to me it would be highly agreeable to spend the time in the contemplation of the most charming friend on earth. But, in the first place, it is not in the power of every one thoroughly to understand the qualities of More;—and in the next, I know not whether he would like to be taken by every artist that comes along. Nor, indeed, do I think it an easier task to paint him, than Alexander or Achilles—nor are they more worthy of immortality. Such a subject absolutely demands the hand of an Apelles; though I am afraid I shall resemble Fulvius rather, or Rutuba. I will, however, endeavour to give you a sketch, more properly than a finished picture, of the whole man; as far as a long and intimate acquaintance

* Ἐκ τοῦ ὁρᾶν γίνεται ἀνθρώποις ἐρᾶν.

has enabled me to observe or recollect. But, if at any future period, some foreign embassy shall bring you acquainted with him, you will then perceive what an unfaithful workman you have selected, and I fear you will accuse me either of envy or blindness when, out of so many fine traits, I have seen or been willing to present you so few.

To begin on the side on which More is least known to you ;—in size he is far from being tall, yet one would not observe upon his shortness. The proportion of his limbs is so excellent, you can discover no fault in it. He has a fair skin, his face inclining to whiteness more properly than paleness, not ruddy, only a delicate colour every where shining through,—his hair brownish yellow, or if you choose, yellowish brown,—beard thin,—eyes greyish with specks ;—which kind denotes a very happy disposition, and with the English is even accounted lovely ; though our countrymen are most pleased with black eyes. No species, it is said, is so free from defects. His countenance corresponds to his disposition—always exhibiting a pleasing and friendly good-humour, sometimes made up for laughing ; and to say the truth, he is better fitted for fun, than for gravity or dignity ; although he has nothing of silliness or buffoonery. His right shoulder seems to be a little higher than his left, especially when he walks. This is not natural to him, but arises from habit, which makes many things of this kind adhere to us. In the rest of his person there is nothing to criticise ; only his hands are a little clumsy—at least when you compare them with the other parts of his body.

He was always from a boy very careless of every thing relating to the adorning of his person, so much so, that he paid little attention even to those things which Ovid says are the only ones which men should regard. Of the beauty of his youth it is easy to form an opinion from the remains,—indeed, he was a young man, not more than twenty-three, when I first knew him ; for he is not much above forty now. His health you would hardly call robust ; it is sufficient, however, to enable him to go through all the duties belonging to a good citizen, and is subject to none or very few disorders. There is a prospect that he will be long lived, as his father is quite advanced in years and is still fresh and vigorous. I never saw any one less difficult in the choice of his food. He drank water till he was grown up, in which he copied after his

father. But lest he should give any one uneasiness, he used to cheat his guests and drink beer very much diluted, and sometimes pure water out of an earthen mug. As it is the custom there to pledge one another, he now and then just sipped the wine, that he might not appear to have an utter aversion to it, and at the same time, that he might accustom himself to things in common use. Beef, salt meat, bread of an inferior quality and much fermented, he preferred to those dishes which are generally considered as dainties. In other respects he was not disinclined to any thing which affords pleasure, whether to the mind or the senses. Dishes in which milk is an ingredient, and fruits were grateful to his appetite—eggs he esteems a great delicacy.

His voice is neither powerful nor very slender, but easily heard, and not shrill and effeminate. It is manifestly a voice for speaking only ; for nature seems not to have made him a singer, although he is delighted with every sort of music. His speech is wonderfully distinct and articulate—not rapid nor hesitating. He is plain in his dress, and never wears silk or purple or gold chains, except when it would be a breach of decorum not to put them on. It is surprising how careless he is of ceremonies which common people are apt to think constitute politeness. As he does not exact them from any one, so he is not very scrupulous to observe them himself, neither in the ordinary intercourse with men nor at table—although he is not ignorant of them, when he chooses. But he thinks it effeminate and unworthy of a man to consume time in trifles of this sort.

Formerly he kept himself aloof from court, and the familiarity of princes, because he was particularly inimical to arrogance and fond of equality ; for, indeed, you will find scarcely any court so well regulated as to be free from clamour and intrigue and hypocrisy and luxury and claims of superiority. Henry VIII was able, not without great difficulty, to draw him to his court, although no one would desire a prince more condescending and well bred.

By nature More is rather fond of his ease ; but as he indulges his inclination when opportunity presents, so when business demands his attention, no one is more active and persevering. He seems to have been born and fashioned for friendship, in which he is very sincere and constant. He is not afraid of the *πολυφιλίαν* which Hesiod discommends. He is

open to the acquaintance of any one, not difficult in his choice, forward and constant in cherishing and preserving friendship. If he lights upon any person whose faults he cannot mend, he withdraws from his society as occasion permits—letting his friendship die a natural death—not using violence.—When he finds any sincere and congenial to his disposition, he is so charmed with their company and conversation that they seem to constitute his chief happiness. For to billiards, dice, cards and other games, with which the herd of great folks are wont to beguile the tedious hours, he has not the least inclination. In his own affairs he is somewhat negligent; but, in taking care of the business of his friends, no one can be more attentive. In a word, if any one seek for a perfect pattern of friendship, he will find none better than More. In society he has so much affability and sweetness of manners, that there is no person of the severest disposition that he does not enliven—no business so appalling that he does not dissipate its irksomeness. From a boy, he was so much delighted with jests, that he seemed born for them, but he never indulged in buffoonery nor detraction. When a youth he wrote and acted little comedies. If any one ever said any thing smart, he was always pleased with it, even though the observation were directed against himself,—so fond is he of whatever is witty and savours of genius. Whence he used to make epigrams when a young man, and was particularly pleased with Lucian. and what is more, he set me to writing the praise of Folly,—which to be sure is pretty much like making a camel dance. Nothing occurs among men, even in the most serious affairs, in which he does not hunt for entertainment. If he has to do with men of learning and ability, he is charmed with their talents—if with the ignorant and fools, he enjoys their folly. He is not displeased with the professed jesters of great men, accommodating himself with wonderful facility to the feelings of all.

With women, commonly, and even with his wife, he is always laughing and cracking jokes. You would say he was another Democritus, or rather, that Pythagorean philosopher, who used to saunter in the market, speculating upon the bustle of buyers and sellers. No one is less swayed by the opinion of the multitude, and on the other hand, no one adheres more closely to common sense. He takes a peculiar pleasure in observing the forms and habits and affections of the differ-

ent animals ; there is scarcely any species of bird which he does not keep at his house,—so of any rare animal, as the ape, fox, weasel, ferret, and the like. And, if he meets besides with any thing foreign or otherwise curious, he purchases it with great eagerness ;—every corner of his house is so filled with these things, that no one can enter without finding something to gaze at, and More's delight is renewed as often as he sees others entertained.

While his age would permit, More had no great aversion to an amour, taking care however of his reputation. He did not seek women, but indulged himself only when they came in his way, and he preferred the interchange of mind to sexual gratification.

He was instructed in the rudiments of learning in his earliest years. In his youth he applied himself to Greek literature and the study of philosophy, in which his father,—otherwise a sensible and excellent man,—was so far from favouring him, that he left him destitute of all assistance, and was almost tempted to disinherit him, because he was unwilling to devote himself to his own profession, which was that of a practiser of the laws of England.* This profession, as it is wholly foreign to literature, so with the English, those who acquire influence by it are reckoned among the greatest and most distinguished men, and scarcely any road leads so directly to wealth and honours,—for this study has laid the foundation of most of the noble families in that island. They hold that no person can be a thorough-bred lawyer without toiling many years. Wherefore, although his young mind, born for better things, had some reason to be disgusted with these dry studies,—yet, after tasting of literature, he became so well versed in the law that litigants consulted no one with more willingness, and no lawyer, who

* 'He was the son of Sir John More, Knt. who was one of the judges of the king's bench, and a man of rare abilities and integrity. Sir John had also much of that pleasant turn and gaiety of wit, for which his son was afterwards distinguished ; and as a specimen of it, Camden relates that he would compare the danger in the choice of a wife, to that of putting a man's hand into a bag full of snakes, with only one eel in it ; where he may indeed chance to light of the eel, but it is a hundred to one he is stung by a snake. However he ventured to put his hand three times into this bag, for he married three wives ; and was not so stung, but that he made shift to live to almost ninety years ; and then did not die of old age,—being lusty and strong, as is said,—but of a surfeit, occasioned by eating grapes.' *Biog. Dict.*

attended to nothing besides his profession, had a more lucrative practice.* So great was the force and activity of his mind.

In addition to all this, he bestows no small labour upon the volumes of the orthodox divines. He had hardly arrived at manhood, when he read public lectures to a full audience upon the books of St. Austin *De Civitate Dei*; and it was neither disreputable nor unprofitable for priests and old men to learn sacred truths from a youth and a layman. At this time, he gave his whole mind to religion, preparing himself by vigils and fastings and prayers for the office of a priest. In which he was not much wiser than most of those who rashly enter upon so arduous a profession without any previous trial of themselves. Nothing prevented him from adopting this course of life, except that he found it impossible to shake off his desire of being married;—so he chose to be a chaste husband rather than an incontinent priest.

He married into a family of distinction. He selected a woman who was young and untaught, (having always lived with her parents and sisters in the country,) in order that he might mould her to his own notions. He had her instructed in letters and in every kind of music, and formed her in such a manner that he would have been well satisfied to spend his life with her, had he not been deprived of her by her premature death. He had several children by her, of whom three girls are living—Margaret, Heloise, and Cecilia—and a son named John.† He could not endure to remain long a widower, although his friends so advised him. In a few months after the burial of his wife, he married a widow, more for the sake of taking care of his family than for pleasure—for she was not handsome and no chicken, as he himself used merrily to say—but she was a notable housewife. He lives with her, however, just as pleasantly as if she were the most lovely creature in the world. Seldom does any husband obtain so much obsequiousness from his wife by authority and severity, as he

* More says that he made four hundred pounds a year by his profession, with a good conscience.

† 'Sir Thomas had the three daughters first, and his wife very much desired a boy: at last she brought him this son; who proving little better than an idiot, Sir Thomas said to his lady; "Thou hast prayed so long for a boy, that thou hast one now, who will be a boy as long as he lives." However, he had all the advantages of a liberal education, by which his parts seem to have been much improved.' *Biog. Dict.*

by his caresses and pleasantry. For what may he not accomplish, after he has effected that a wife, already verging towards old age and not the most pliable for such a purpose, and very attentive besides to her affairs, should learn to play on the harp, the lute, the monochord and the flageolet, and every day perform a task on them at his requisition? In the same gentle manner he governs all his family,—no bustle—no scolding. If any difficulty arises, he finds means to remove it. He never let any one leave him with feelings of enmity on either side. A felicity,—decreed by fate,—seems attached to his house, in which no one ever lived who was not advanced to better fortune; in which no one ever contracted a stain upon his reputation. We seldom meet with persons who live in such harmony with their mothers as he did with his step-mother—for his father had already married a second wife—each of them he loved like his own mother. And now lately his father is married to a third; and More swears upon his honour he never saw a better. Towards his parents and children and sisters, his behaviour is neither troublesome from importunate kindness, nor wanting in the offices of affection. His mind is entirely free from sordid love of money. He lays up for his children out of his income such a sum as he thinks will be sufficient for them, and the residue he generously expends.

While he practised at the bar, he gave every person correct and friendly advice, with an eye to their advantage and not his own. Many he used to persuade to settle their disputes, telling them it would cost them less. If he did not succeed,—for there are some who like to be engaged in lawsuits,—he then told them in what way they might contend at the least expense. In London, his native city, he acted for many years as a judge in civil causes; which office required very little labour (for the court was held only on Thursdays in the forenoon) and was very honourable. No judge despatched more causes, or conducted himself with stricter integrity. He frequently gave back the money which suitors are bound by usage to pay—for before every trial the plaintiff lays down three groats and the defendant the like sum, and it is illegal to exact any more. By this behaviour he has rendered himself very dear to his fellow citizens. He had determined to rest satisfied with this situation, which was sufficiently respectable and not exposed to great hazards.

More than once, was he compelled to go upon embassies—in which he displayed so much ability, that the most serene Henry VIII would not be contented until he had dragged him to court. I say dragged,—because no one was ever more solicitous to gain admittance than he to avoid it. But when that excellent king designed to fill his cabinet with men of learning and wisdom and virtue, among others, he sent for More in particular—with whom he is so intimate, that he never lets him go from him. If business is to be transacted, no one is a better counsellor; and if the king chooses to unbend his mind by pleasant conversation, no companion is more agreeable.

Difficult causes frequently require a judge of great authority and discreteness. More manages them so skilfully, that both the parties feel under obligations to him. He never was prevailed upon to take a bribe. Happy for the people, if the prince always appointed magistrates like More. Nor has any haughtiness followed in the train of these honours. In the midst of this throng of affairs he remembers his humble old friends and often recurs to his favourite letters. All the influence he derives from his dignity and the favour of a munificent prince, he uses for the public good and the benefit of his friends. His disposition always inclined him to confer favours, and was wonderfully turned to kindness, and he shows it the more, now his means of gratifying it are increased. To one he gives pecuniary aid; another he protects by his authority; another he advances by his recommendation. And to those, whom he can assist in no other way, he gives good advice;—so that no one ever leaves him with a sad countenance. More may be called the patron of all the poor. He accounts it a great gain if he has been able to relieve the oppressed, to extricate the perplexed and embarrassed, to restore the alienated to favour. He bestows a kindness with the utmost willingness and never reminds one of it. Although he is perfectly happy with so many debtors, and felicity is apt to be attended by vain glory,—yet I never saw a man more free from this fault.

I return to the mention of the studies which chiefly conciliated the mutual affection between More and myself. In the early part of his life he attended most to writing verse; afterwards he laboured a long time to render his prose more harmonious—trying his hand at every style of composition;

with what success, it is needless to say,—to you, especially, who have his works perpetually in your hands. He was particularly fond of disputations, and for these he preferred paradoxical subjects, because they gave greater scope for ingenuity. Hence, when he was but a lad, he undertook a dialogue, in which he even defended Plato's community of wives. He answered Lucian's tyrannicide, in which argument he wished me to oppose him, in order that he might make a more satisfactory experiment of his proficiency. He published the *Utopia* for the purpose of pointing out inconveniences in government, with a particular reference, however, to the British constitution which he understands thoroughly. The second book was composed first in a period of leisure; he afterwards wrote the first book in haste as occasion served. Hence there is some inequality in the style. In *ex-tempore* speaking he is very happy. His invention is prompt and always anticipating; his memory ready,—which, as it has every thing numbered,—if I may use the expression,—suggests at once whatever the time or subject demands. In controversies he is exceedingly acute—so that he frequently gives trouble to the ablest theologians, even when contending on subjects belonging to their own province. John Colet, a man of shrewd and correct judgment, often says in conversation, that Britain possesses but a single genius; though fine geniuses abound in that island.

He cultivates true piety with assiduity, but he detests all superstition. He has stated hours, in which he offers prayers to God which come from the heart and are not a mere ceremony. With his friends he discourses of a future life in such a manner, that you may know he speaks from his soul, and not without the best hope. Such is More, even in a court. And yet there are some who think christians are no where to be found but in a monastery. Such men, a most wise king not only admits into his family and bed-chamber, but invites,—nor invites merely, but even draws by force. These men he has the constant observers and witnesses of his whole conduct—they sit in his councils—they are the companions of his travels. With these he rejoices to be surrounded, instead of being beset by young men ruined by dissipation, or courtesans, or sycophants; of which one may allure to absurd pleasures—another inflame to tyranny—another invent new arts to plunder the people. Had you lived in this court, Hut-

ten, you would have given a different description of a court and been no longer a court-hater; although you now live with a prince as virtuous as one can desire. Nor are you destitute of men to encourage noble undertakings,—such as Stromerus and Coppus. But what are these few to the swarm of distinguished men,—Montjoy, Linacer, Pace, Colet, Stockeslie, Latimer, More, Tonstall, Clerk, and others like them?—Of whom, whichever you name, you speak of a world of virtues and knowledge. But I have hopes, and no ordinary hopes, that Albert, the ornament at this time of our Germany, will both call men into his family like himself and be a powerful example to the other princes to endeavour,—each at his own court,—to do the same thing.

You here have a copy from a most excellent original, poorly drawn by a very bad artist. It will please you the less, if you should ever become acquainted with More. But I have taken care that you shall not accuse me of disobedience, nor always reproach me for the shortness of my letters. Although this one has not seemed long to me while writing it—and I know it will not be tedious to you when you read it—which is all owing to the charm of our friend.

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Antwerp, July 23, 1519.



Literary Institutions.—University.—Library.

UNDER this head, in the twentieth Number of this Journal, some remarks were made on the uses and objects of a University, in the larger sense of the word. It is an establishment for systematical education in the three principal professions;—also an institution, to which a young man, who has time to spare before entering on the study of his profession, and a young man of fortune, not bound to devote himself to any active calling, may repair for courses of lectures, political and historical, with all their subsidies,—courses physical and philosophical, on polite literature in all its branches, and in general, on what deserves to be known, and what people desire to know. Such an establishment is moreover the means of gathering together, of creating the literary profession among us; by providing support to a few men of genius